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The Battleship Program Once More.

The Secretary of the Navy, in his annual report in December, recommended the addition of three new battleships to the navy this year. Later Secretary Meyer appeared before the House Naval Committee and urged appropriation for these three ships, which he told the committee would cost approximately \$15,000,000 each. He recommended also the building of twelve torpedo-boat destroyers, several gunboats, and an ammunition ship. The Secretary's reasons for urging the new battleships are the same as those which have been put forward annually for many years past, with which the country is already thoroughly familiar, and which have, we are glad to say, less and less weight with Congress, because of their general groundlessness.

Whatever the report of the committee may be, it is to be hoped that the House, constituted substantially as it was last year, will not recede from its position of one battleship adopted, as a compromise with the Senate, at the session last summer. Indeed, a strong contest is being made in the commit-

tee and in the House against the increase of the navy by any new ships this year, and if the anti-battleship men are successful, only one Dreadnaught will be ordered, and that only through compromise with the Senate. The position of the anti-big-navy men in Congress remains practically the same as it was before the election in November, and we have reason to expect that no backward step will be taken.

However, every influence possible should immediately be brought to bear upon Congressmen, as the Navy League has just launched a project which is insidious and full of danger to the movement for limitation of armaments and the leadership of our country toward the peace of the world. The league has prepared a petition to Congress asking for a reorganization of the personnel of the navy and the adoption of a "policy for building up the navy," couched in the following words: "A continuing and consistent program of naval construction, to be determined by a Council of National Defense duly authorized by Congress. To fix the country's standard, the proposed Council of National Defense should take into consideration the naval programs and military strength of possible opponents."

This petition, which prominent men all over the nation are being requested to sign and which most of our peace leaders have been asked to endorse, is backed by "sixty-seven reasons for a strong navy." These reasons we cannot here examine in detail. Many of them are simply assertions for which there is no proof. Those drawn from history are based on conditions in our country's annals which no longer exist, or on situations of other countries to which ours are in no way analogous. The Navy League takes no account of our geographical isolation, nor of our vastly increased internal strength in population and resources, which renders us secure against attack. It does not seem to know that we have no enemies; that no nation has ever attacked or even threatened to attack us, and that if we build up an elaborate system of naval defense, it will be against an enemy who is a pure figment of the imagination.

Again, the League takes no account whatever of the Hague conferences and conventions; of the fact that the nations are moving powerfully together; that because of the general growth of civilization and the multiplication of solemn treaties and conventions war is ten times less frequent and less likely than it was even a half century ago; that unfortified coasts today, however long they may be, are defended from attack and bombardment by a solemn agreement to which all the nations are parties. Indeed, these navy promoters, in demanding a Council of National Defense against purely hypothetical opponents, assume substantially that we are still liv-